

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 6, 2010

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2009—10 REGULAR SESSION

**ASSEMBLY BILL**

**No. 2143**

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**Introduced by Assembly Member Gilmore**

February 18, 2010

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*An act to add Section 64.5 to the Military and Veterans Code, relating to military and veterans.*

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2143, as amended, Gilmore. The Department of Veterans Affairs: consolidation of services to veterans.

Existing law establishes the Department of Veteran's Affairs within state government and sets forth its powers and duties, including, but not limited to, administration of veterans benefits programs. Existing law establishes the California Veterans Board within the department and sets forth its powers and duties, including, but not limited to its power to determine operational policy for the department.

~~This bill would declare the intent of the Legislature to subsequently provide for the consolidation under the jurisdiction of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the California Veterans Board or all programs that currently bestow any benefits for which veterans may be eligible but which are currently under the jurisdiction of other state agencies, and to provide for a commensurate transfer of staff and other assets from those agencies to the department and to the board~~ *establish the California Veterans Services and Workforce Development Division within the Department of Veterans Affairs for the purpose of coordinating and administering veterans assistance programs in the state, and would require the division to perform various functions and*

*duties relating to the coordination and administration of veterans assistance programs, as specified.*

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: ~~no~~-yes.  
State-mandated local program: no.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

1     *SECTION 1. The Legislature hereby finds and declares the*  
2     *following:*

3     *(a) California has the largest veteran population in the nation,*  
4     *comprised of an estimated 2 million veterans. Each month,*  
5     *thousands of military personnel are released from active service,*  
6     *and face tremendous challenges transitioning back into civilian*  
7     *life.*

8     *(b) The challenges military veterans face are compounded by*  
9     *a complex system of veteran assistance programs that is difficult*  
10    *to navigate.*

11    *(c) The United States Department of Veterans Affairs expended*  
12    *approximately \$6 billion in California in the 2005 federal fiscal*  
13    *year. Of that amount, \$2.66 billion was in disability payments*  
14    *(compensation and benefits) to veterans. The states that have the*  
15    *largest veteran populations in the nation are California, Florida,*  
16    *and Texas. Texas veterans have collected 44 percent more*  
17    *disability benefits than the amount collected by California veterans.*

18    *(d) Increasing disability benefit participation in California in*  
19    *an amount that would approach the national average could*  
20    *generate an additional \$330 million in annual payments to*  
21    *California veterans.*

22    *SEC. 2. Section 64.5 is added to the Military and Veterans*  
23    *Code, to read:*

24    64.5. *(a) The California Veterans Services and Workforce*  
25    *Development Division is hereby established within the department*  
26    *for the purpose of coordinating and administering veterans*  
27    *assistance programs in the state. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs*  
28    *shall have authority over the division.*

29    *(b) The division shall do all of the following:*

30    *(1) Coordinate with other state agencies that provide benefits*  
31    *and assistance to veterans to ensure that information about*  
32    *veterans assistance programs and benefits is made available to*  
33    *all state agencies that serve veterans in the state.*

1     (2) *Administer the Transitional Assistance Program (TAP) and*  
2 *the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP), in cooperation*  
3 *with the Employment Development Department. The division shall*  
4 *work with staff from the Employment Development Department to*  
5 *develop a plan whereby responsibility for the administration of*  
6 *TAP and DVOP shall be transferred from the Employment*  
7 *Development Department to the division.*

8     (3) *Ensure that other state agencies and officials that are*  
9 *involved in the implementation and administration of veterans*  
10 *services programs are informed when any changes in existing*  
11 *programs are required, or new programs are established that*  
12 *provide assistance and benefits to veterans, and require that those*  
13 *agencies and officials report to the division when those changes*  
14 *occur or new programs are established.*

15     (4) *Collaborate with staff from other state agencies including,*  
16 *but not limited to, the Labor and Workforce Development Agency,*  
17 *the Employment Training Panel, the California Workforce*  
18 *Investment Board, the State Department of Mental Health, the*  
19 *Department of General Services, the State Department of Alcohol*  
20 *and Drug Programs, and representatives of the University of*  
21 *California, the California State University, and the California*  
22 *Community Colleges with regard to the provision of veterans*  
23 *services and benefits.*

24     ~~SECTION 1. It is the intent of the Legislature to subsequently~~  
25 ~~enact a measure including provisions that would consolidate, under~~  
26 ~~the jurisdiction of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the~~  
27 ~~Veterans Board, all programs that currently bestow any benefits~~  
28 ~~for which veterans may be eligible but which are under the~~  
29 ~~jurisdiction of other state agencies, and to provide for a~~  
30 ~~commensurate transfer of staff and other assets from those agencies~~  
31 ~~to the department and to the board.~~